

**What is claimed is:**

1. A computerized method of creating a data message for electronic transmission to a recipient comprising the steps of:
  - selecting at least one image file to be included in said data message;
  - determining exchange rights for said recipient, said exchange rights establishing at least one action available to said recipient with respect to handling of said at least one image file; and
  - bundling said at least one image file and said exchange rights to form said data message.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said selecting further includes selecting at least one image annotation, audio and/or text file related to said at least one image file.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein said at least one image file and related at least one image annotation, audio and/or text file are included in an exam record stored in a database, during said selecting, said exam record being opened to expose the files therein through a user interface thereby to enable files in said exam record to be selected.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein said user interface is a graphical user interface and wherein files of said exam record are selected using a computer pointing device.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein during said determining different categories of exchange rights are examined to locate the category to which said recipient has been assigned thereby to determine the exchange rights for said recipient.

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6. The method of claim 5 wherein during examination of the different categories of exchange rights, if the recipient is not located, default exchange rights are assigned to said recipient.

7. The method of claim 5 wherein said different categories of exchange rights include browse only, browse and archive, browse and forward, and browse, archive and forward exchange rights.

8. The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of encrypting clear text in a selected related text file prior to said bundling.

9. The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of encoding selected audio and/or text files prior to said bundling.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein said encoding includes at least one of compressing and scrambling said audio and/or text files.

11. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of encrypting said data message after said bundling.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of MIME encoding said encrypted data message.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein said at least one image file is compressed.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein said at least one image file is compressed using a wavelet algorithm and wherein parameters for said compression are computed according to image modality.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein said compression parameters accompany said at least one image file and wherein said at least one image file is also digitally watermarked.

16. A computerized method for controlling actions available to a recipient receiving a data message from a sender, said method comprising the steps of:  
    creating a data message that includes at least one image file and exchange rights for said recipient, said exchange rights establishing at least one action available to said recipient with respect to handling of said at least one image file;  
    transmitting said data message to a computer system of said recipient;  
    deconstructing said data message at said recipient computer system to determine the exchange rights therein; and  
    permitting said recipient to perform said at least one action with said at least one image file in accordance with said exchange rights.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein said exchange rights are selected from the group consisting of browse only, browse and archive, browse and forward, and browse, archive and forward exchange rights.

18. The method of claim 17 further comprising the step of setting a flag following transmission of said data message to said recipient computer system and generating a prompt if a receipt acknowledgement is not received from said recipient computer system within a threshold period of time following said transmission.

19. The method of claim 16 wherein during said creating at least one image annotation, audio and/or text file related to said at least one image file is included in said data message.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein during said creating said at least one image file, said at least one related image annotation, audio and/or text file and said exchange rights are bundled to form said data message.

21. The method of claim 20 further comprising the step of encrypting clear text in each text file in said data message prior to said bundling.

22. The method of claim 21 further comprising the step of encoding each audio and/or text file in said data message prior to said bundling.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein said encoding includes at least one of compressing and scrambling each said audio and/or text file.

24. The method of claim 20 further comprising the step of encrypting said data message prior to said transmitting.

25. The method of claim 24 further comprising the step of MIME encoding said encrypted data message prior to said transmitting.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein during said deconstructing, said data message is MIME decoded, decrypted and debundled.

27. A computerized method for communicating a data message between a sender and a recipient comprising the steps of:  
from a computer system of said sender, transmitting a data message to a computer system of said recipient, said data message including at least one image file and exchange rights for said recipient, said exchange rights establishing whether said recipient is permitted to browse said at least one image file, browse and archive said at least one image file, browse and forward said at least one image file, or browse, archive and forward said at least one image file;  
at the recipient computer system upon receipt of said data message, deconstructing said data message to determine the exchange rights therein; and permitting said recipient to handle said at least one image file in accordance with said exchange rights.

28. The method of claim 27 further comprising the step of setting a flag at said sender computer system following transmission of said data message to said recipient computer system and generating a prompt if a receipt acknowledgement is not received from said recipient computer system within a threshold period of time following said transmission.

29. The method of claim 28 wherein said data message further includes at least one image annotation, audio and/or text file related to said at least one image file.

30. The method of claim of claim 29 further comprising the step of at the recipient computer system, transmitting a reply data message to the sender computer system.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein said reply data message includes at least one audio and/or text file and said exchange rights.

32. The method of claim 31 further comprising the step of setting a flag at said recipient computer system following transmission of said data message to said sender computer system and generating a prompt if a receipt acknowledgement is not received from said sender computer system within a threshold period of time following said transmission.

33. The method of claim 32 further comprising the step of encrypting clear text in each text file in said data message and said reply data message prior to said transmitting.

34. The method of claim 33 further comprising the step of encoding each audio and/or text file in said data message and said reply data message prior to said transmitting.

D E S C R I P T I O N D E P E N D E N T

35. The method of claim 34 further comprising the step of encrypting said data message and said reply data message prior to said transmitting.

36. A data message structure comprising:  
at least one image file; and  
an exchange rights file, said exchange rights file including data fields complimentary to data fields in said at least one image file, the data fields in said exchange rights file specifying at least one recipient who is permitted access to said at least one image file and being linked to said at least one image file.

37. The message structure of claim 36 wherein the data fields in said exchange rights file determine if said at least one recipient is permitted to browse said at least one image file.

38. The message structure of claim 37 wherein the data fields in said exchange rights file determine if said at least one recipient is permitted to archive said at least one image file and/or forward said at least one image file to another recipient.

39. The message structure of claim 38 wherein said at least one image file is compressed.

40. The message structure of claim 39 wherein said at least one image file is compressed using a wavelet algorithm and wherein parameters for said compression are computed according to image modality.

41. The method of claim 40 wherein said compression parameters accompany said at least one image file and wherein said at least one image file is also digitally watermarked.